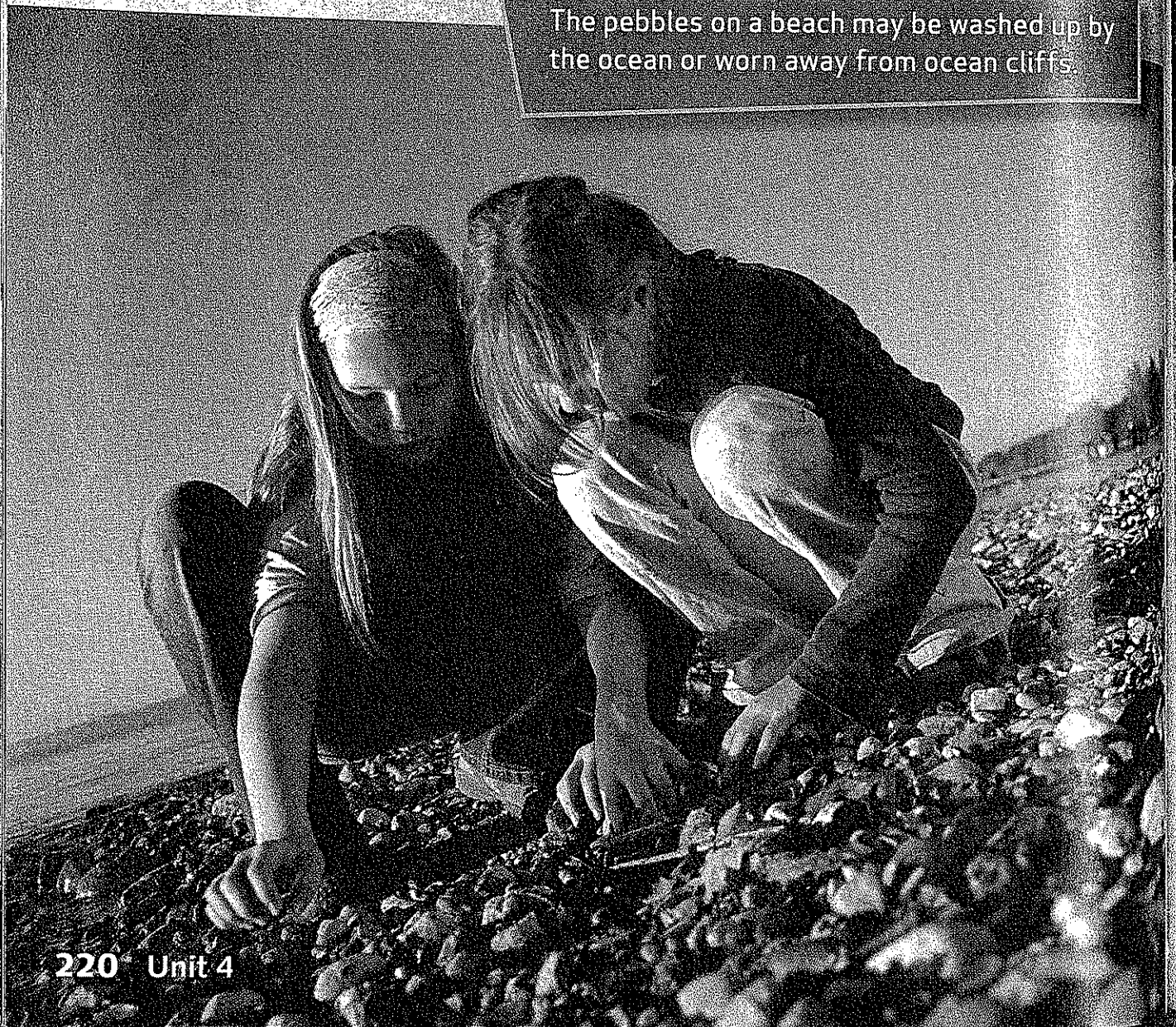


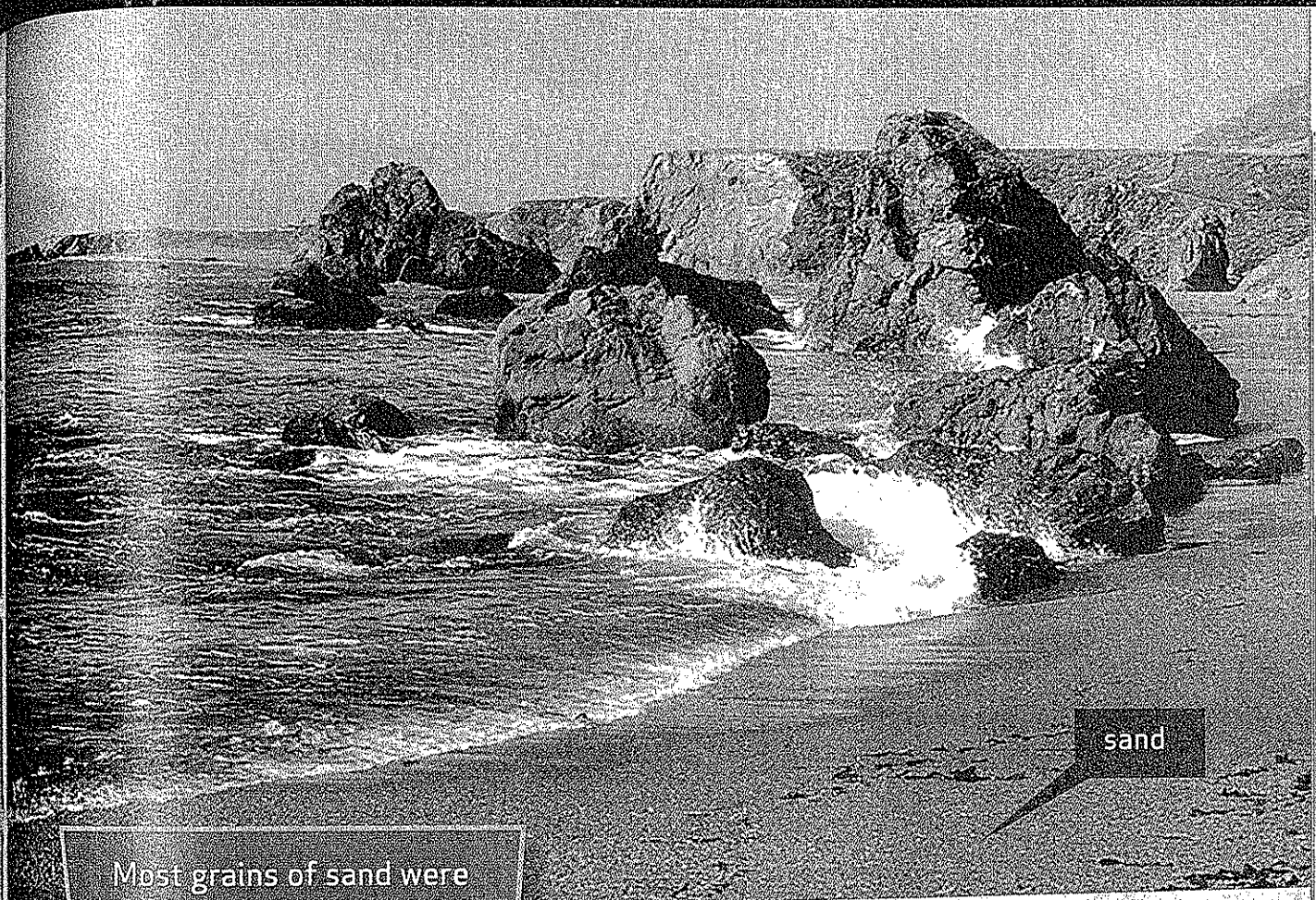
Chapter 4

Earth at Your Feet

You don't have to dig deep to find out about Earth. Some of Earth's story is right under your feet. You can find out a lot just by looking closely at the rocks and the soil.

The pebbles on a beach may be washed up by the ocean or worn away from ocean cliffs.





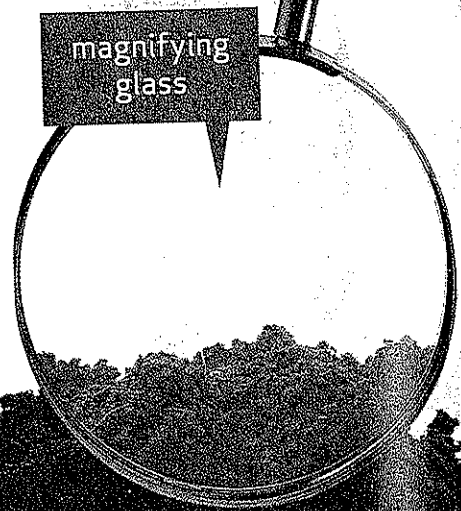
Most grains of sand were once parts of solid rocks.

Over time rocks are worn down by wind, rain, running water, and glaciers. Water from rivers and streams carries away small bits that have broken off. These tiny pieces of rock can end up as the sand on a beach. They can also mix with other things to make soil.



Look Closer

You can use a magnifying glass to look at soil. You might see tiny pieces of rock, plants, or insects. Each kind of soil has different amounts of these things. This provides good food for the plants growing there.



The soil in this forest is covered with rotting leaves.





The red soil in this Australian desert is rich in iron.

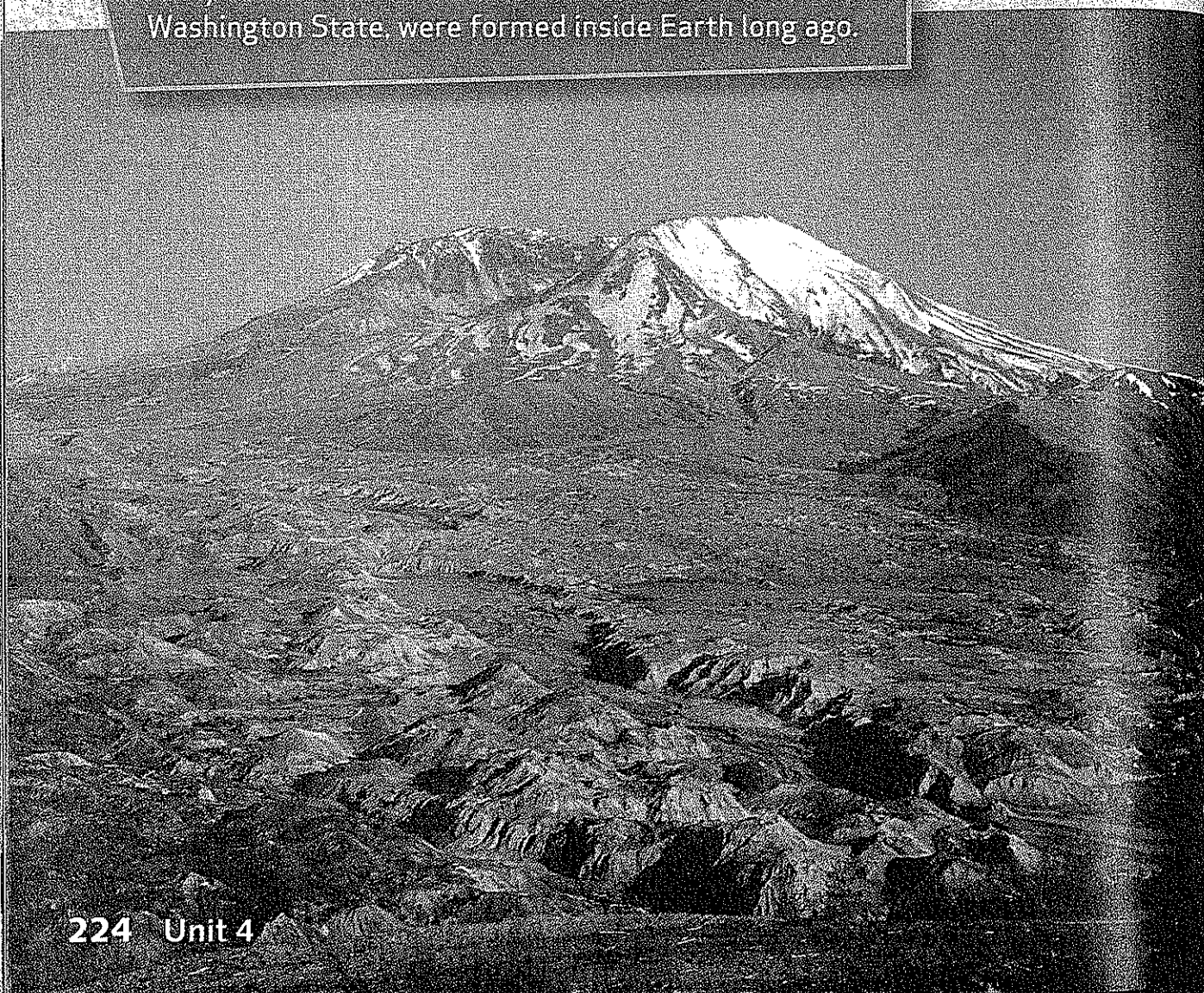
Maybe the soil outside your home is red. The color of the soil depends on the kind of rock and amount of decayed material it has come from. Red soil was made from rock that had a lot of iron in it. Iron is a hard mineral from which steel is made.



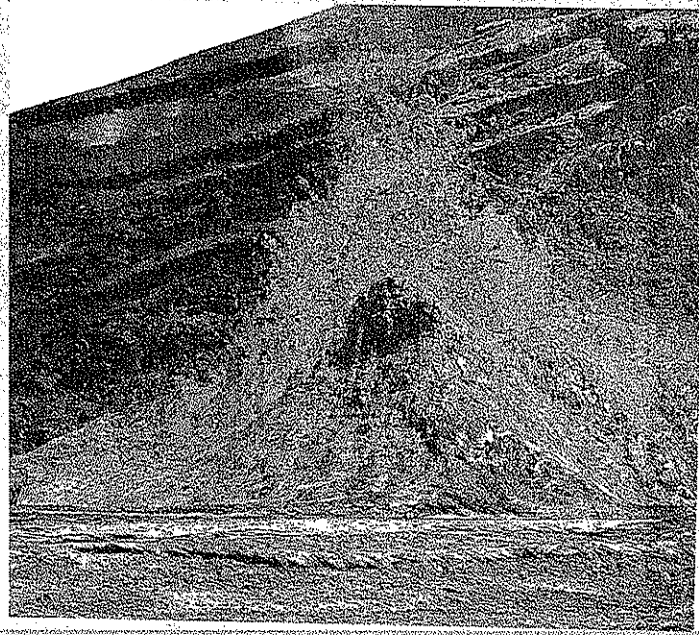
A Rock's Journey

Rocks move in a slow journey that may never really end! The plates of rock that move on Earth's crust and upper mantle drag pieces of rock beneath the surface. The rock changes. It is melted by the heat from the center of Earth.

Many of the rocks in and around Mount St. Helens, in Washington State, were formed inside Earth long ago.



Some of the changed rock is pushed up to Earth's surface where it forms hills and mountains. Then some is forced out as melted rock when a volcano erupts. This rock is broken up by wind and water. Then the rock is dragged beneath the surface again. This journey is called the rock cycle.



This photograph shows a volcano erupting.

The Rock Cycle

